

# *The Rapture and the Passover*

By Rabbi K.A. Schneider

Many see God's Word as two separate books—The Old Testament and The New Testament—and this often affects how they view God, as if He changes from one account to the other. They may not admit this out loud, but they think it when they characterize Him as mostly judgmental in the Old Testament and mostly loving in the New Testament. I have struggled with this at times, and I know most believers have as well.

God is the same in the Old Testament as in the New Testament. But we can miss this—and distort our view of God when we fail to see the Bible as one complete book. Some of you reading this book have had a new revelation about the Old Testament, or the *Tanakh*, and that is wonderful. But did you also know that we cannot fully understand the *B'rit Hadashah*, or the New Testament, if we do not read it through the lens of the *Tanakh*? In other words, we must understand the New Testament in the light of the Old Testament. We cannot interpret the New Testament in a vacuum or treat the Bible as if it begins with Matthew 1. The New Testament was intended to be viewed through the lens of the Old Testament.

In addition, the *B'rit Hadashah* was never written to be detached from the *Tanakh*. If we want to interpret the Bible correctly, then we must interpret it as a whole, starting with Genesis and continuing all the way through the last chapter of Revelation. This is why Jesus frequently quoted from the *Tanakh*, validating its authenticity as the Word of God. The Apostles and early church writers constantly referenced the Hebrew prophets of the old Testament for the same reason.

For example, the Book of Matthew begins with a genealogy of *Yeshua*, traced all the way back to Abraham. Matthews' genealogy is not just a long, boring list of names; those names are the actual, historic links between the Old and New Testaments. In God's eyes they are one book—His written Word, the Old and New Testament, stitched together. And what is the main thread that binds them? *Yeshua HaMashiach*. He even said in John 5:46, ***“For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote of Me.”***

## **The Lamb of God**

The Fundamental truth of the Bible's unity is essential to remember as we continue our study of the end times. As has been stated, the Book of Revelation is the greatest body of literature we have on the end times. But to study it correctly, we must see it through the complete lens of the Old Testament. And possibly nothing confirms this principle more than the Book of Revelation than how Jesus is referred to most often in that book.

Did you know that *Yeshua* is called the *“Lamb of God”* twenty-nine times in Revelation? That is remarkable considering there are only twenty-two chapters in the book! In Revelation 5:6, for example, John says he ***“saw a lamb in the midst of the throne...standing as though it had been slain.”*** Only two verses later, he says those in the throne room “fell down before the Lamb” (v. 8), only to be joined by countless voices crying out, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain” (Vs. 12) and, “To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!” (vs.13) Regarding Armageddon John says the armies of the world “will wage war with the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings” (Rev.17:14). And in Revelation 21:23 the New Jerusalem is described as a place where there is no need for sunlight or moonlight because ***“it's lamp is the lamb.”***

But why is Jesus called this so often? Why the Lamb of God? Why not the mighty horse of God? Or the powerful bear of God? At the very least, why not the great Lion of Judah, which He is also called in Revelation? Lions and bears and horses are much more powerful than Lambs, aren't they?

We know for certain that when Jesus returns, He will not be coming as some soft, fuzzy figure—certainly not lamb-like. He will return with more power than this world has ever seen—enough that the Antichrist, as we saw in the last chapter, will be destroyed by the mere light and breath of Jesus' presence!

This is not some small, insignificant question. It is at the core of everything we study in this book. I believe the answer to this question reveals the truth not only about God's character, His love for the world, and even the bigger picture of why He created the world—and us—in the first place. Ultimately I believe the answer to why

Yeshua is called the Lamb more than anything else in the Book of Revelation may be the most important truth that will unlock your understanding of the end times.

As you might expect, we must answer that question by applying the lens of the Old Testament. Simply put, Jesus is called the Lamb of God more than anything else in the last days because He is intricately connected to the Passover lamb used in the children of Israel's great deliverance and exodus out of Egypt. If we want to understand the Book of Revelation and the end times correctly, we must view them through the lens of the Passover experience.

Yeshua's mission on earth was to bring to fullness that which was revealed in primitive form through the ancient Israelites more than thirty-five years ago. How were the Israelites saved? By the blood of the Passover Lamb.

Let's turn to a pivotal passage of Scripture to learn more about this. In Exodus 12 God gave the Israelites instructions while they were still in Egypt:

"Every man shall take a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a household....Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats...and then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two side posts and on the upper doorpost of the houses in which they shall eat it. They shall eat the flesh on that night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs....In this way shall you eat it: with your waist girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover.

"For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast, and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment. I am the Lord. The blood shall be to you for a sign on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you when I smite the land of Egypt.

"Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Draw out and take for yourselves a lamb according to your families and kill the Passover lamb....And when your children shall say to you, 'What does this service mean to you?' that you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our households.—Exodus 12:3, 5-8, 11-13, 21, 26-27.

That night the Lord did just as He said, passing through Egypt and killing every firstborn in the land whose house was not marked. It was a horrendous night, filled with anguish and death. And yet for those whose doorposts were covered by the blood of a perfect, spotless lamb, the Lord fulfilled His promise to "pass over" them and keep them safe. It was only after this night that the Israelites were released from their bondage and led out of Egypt.

### **Revelation Through The Passover Lens**

The underlying theme of the Passover experience is God delivering His children out of Egypt through the blood of the lamb. This is the gospel in a nutshell: God has sent His Son, the perfect Lamb, to the earth to deliver us from the evil that rules this world. Just as God delivered the nation of Israel out of Egypt in ancient times, He will once again in the end times deliver His people from the "Egypt" that is this fallen world and the cosmic forces of darkness that permeate it.

This is a remarkable revelation for many people. It may even be the first time you have made the connection between what happened in Exodus and what happens in the Book of Revelation. Yet the further parallels between Israel's exodus and the world's salvation—both today and in the end times—are equally astounding. So let's take a look at some of the main "players" in each setting.

Egypt, as in the time of Israel's exodus, was a prophetic picture of the present world in which we live. For more than four hundred years the Israelites were in bondage. They were slaves to a wicked culture bent on keeping them in chains.

Pharaoh, the supreme ruler of Egypt, was a prophetic picture of Satan, whom the *B'rit Hadashah* (and even Yeshua) refers to as the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4) or the "ruler of this world" (John 12:31). Pharaoh

believed he was God, and the people indeed considered him a deity. His rule dominated every aspect of Egyptian culture, just as Satan's authority permeates every aspect of our world today.

We live in a world controlled by the "god of this world." Our world, along with all its principalities and powers, seeks to put people in slavery every day. And the ruler of this world wants nothing more than to keep those people bound. As a result, countless individuals are in bondage to such things as drugs, alcohol, money, pornography, time, their careers, sports—the list goes on and on. Many people on earth feel oppressed and beaten down in the same way the Israelites were in bondage to the Egyptians.

To that degree Israel was a prophetic picture of all God's people today. This does not mean that those who come to faith in the Messiah must literally become Jewish or become part of the nation of Israel. But in prophetic sense all of God's children today—those who have been born again into *Yeshua* the Messiah, whether Jew or Gentile—are the "*Israel of God*" (Galatians 6:16)

The Passover lamb—that spotless lamb each Hebrew family sacrificed that night in Egypt—was, of course, Jesus. Even outside of the Book of Revelation this connection is made (John 1:29), says that when John the Baptist "*saw Jesus coming toward him [he] said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.'*" And in 1st Cor. 5:7, Paul wrote, "*For Christ, our Passover lamb, is sacrificed for us.*"(kjv).

What is interesting is that every Jewish family in Egypt was commanded to take and kill a lamb, according to Exodus 12. This was not just a ceremony conducted by priests, elected officials, or professionals for hire. Each family brought the lamb into its home for a season. The family members were to take it in, care for it, and love it as if it were one of them. Then, on the appropriate day of the month, they would take the lamb outside to put it to death. It was not just the father who quietly took the lamb behind the house and killed it without anyone seeing it. Instead every Israelite was commanded to take part in putting the lamb to death (Exodus 12:6).

Why do you think God instructed the Israelites to do it this way? Wasn't that a little too violent for the children? Didn't God understand family values?

God did this so that people in every generation after *Yeshua's* would recognize that we were all participants in His death. It was not just the Romans who killed Jesus, nor was it only the Jews; *it was every single one of us.* We all crucified the Lamb of God on the cross by the sin nature within each of us, regardless of our age or race or heritage. It was your sin and my sin that put Him on the cross two thousand years ago.

Despite our shared guilt in Jesus' death, we can each receive the blessing of His selfless sacrifice, just as every Israelite who killed the Passover Lamb was blessed. Once the family took the blood of the lamb and put it over the doorpost of its home, the family was safe from harm. When the Lord passed through Egypt that night and saw the blood of a spotless lamb on the doorpost, he passed over that household. It did not matter if you were a good Hebrew or a bad one, whether you had prayed enough or tithed enough or anything else. The Lord was not looking for the righteousness of the individual. The thing that mattered was whether you were covered by the lamb's blood.

It is no different today. Our works or attempts at righteousness, as good as they might be, do not earn us salvation. The only thing that saves us is being marked by the blood of the Lamb of God. *Yeshua HaMashiach.* First Peter 1:19 says we were redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." It is His blood covering our lives that makes us righteous, holy, and cleansed when the great judge sees us today. And just as powerfully it will be the same blood of the lamb that will cover believers in the end times. His blood will mark them in such a way that they will be covered and protected from God's judgments and wrath. Revelation 9:4 describes a protection from judgment for those with "the seal of God in their foreheads." End-time believers will have a seal of God on their foreheads." End time believers will have a seal of protection because of the Lamb's blood covering them, just as ancient Israel was protected when the plagues fell.

*An excerpt from Chapter 5 of "The Book of Revelation Decoded" by Rabbi K.A. Schneider.  
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